

Message Text

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ORIGIN HA-05

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ARA/AND:DKEMP
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SHUM, ELAB, PE

SUBJECT: INFORMATION ON HUNGER STRIKE

REF: LIMA 2017, LIMA 1610, LIMA 1312

1. ON MARCH 15, DEPARTMENT OFFICER ELLIS O. JONES IN BUREAU OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS TOOK A 45-MINUTE TELEPHONE CALL ORIGINATING FROM LIMA FROM FATHER TOM BURNS, U.S. CITIZEN AND MARYKNOLL FATHER WHO SAID HE IS PRESENTLY WORKING AS A PARISH PRIEST IN ONE OF THE POOR PARISHES OF LIMA. TOM QUIGLEY OF LATIN AMERICAN SECTION OF INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE AND PEACE DIVISION OF U.S. CATHOLIC CONFERENCE LATER SAID THAT HE KNOWS FATHER BURNS AND IS AWARE OF HIS WORK IN LIMA.
 2. FATHER BURNS IS DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT HE SAYS IS AN IMPASSE BETWEEN 70 LABOR UNION LEADERS AND SUPPORTERS NOW DETAINED BY PERUVIAN AUTHORITIES AS A RESULT OF A CONTINUING HUNGER STRIKE WHICH WAS BEGUN ON OR ABOUT JANUARY 28 BY UNCLASSIFIED
- UNCLASSIFIED
- PAGE 02 STATE 068055
- EIGHT INDIVIDUALS IN A LIMA CHURCH, AND WAS EXPANDED TO 70 INDIVIDUALS AND FOUR CHURCHES ABOUT FEBRUARY 6. STRIKE CONTINUES IN ONE OR MORE INCARCERATION CENTERS FOLLOWING THE CLEARING OF THE CHURCHES AND ARREST OF THE STRIKERS ON FEBRUARY 10.
3. FATHER BURNS SAID THAT PARTIALLY AS RESULT OF EFFORTS

OF "BISHOPS COMMITTEE OF SOLIDARITY" AND SUPPORT FOR THE HUNGER STRIKERS ORGANIZED BY CHURCH, STRIKERS HAVE REDUCED THEIR ORIGINAL FOUR DEMANDS (REHIRING OF ALL WORKERS DISMISSED LAST SUMMER UNDER DECREE 0-0-77-TR; AMNESTY FOR ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS; RETURN OF ALL POLITICAL DEPORTEES AND RELEASE WITHOUT CHARGE THE STRIKERS) TO ONE ONLY (RELEASE AND REHIRING OF STRIKERS). FATHER BURNS CLAIMS THAT THE GOVERNMENT REMAINS ADAMANT AND, IN THE PERSON OF COLONEL LEON, VICE MINISTER OF LABOR, HAS AGREED ONLY TO RELEASE WITHOUT CHARGE THE STRIKERS BUT HAS REFUSED TO ENTERTAIN IDEA OF REHIRING ANY OF DISMISSED WORKERS.

4. IN DESPERATION, STRIKERS, ACCORDING TO FATHER BURNS, ARE ABOUT TO BEGIN A „DRY" HUNGER STRIKE (TOTAL ABSTINENCE FROM FOOD AND WATER) WHICH HE BELIEVES MIGHT RESULT IN ONE OR MORE DEATHS WHICH WOULD BE AN IMPORTANT ADVERSE POLITICAL EVENT. HE ALSO COMPLAINS THAT PERUVIAN DAILIES ARE DELIBERATELY REFRAINING FROM COVERING STORY FOR FEAR OF ADVERSE GOVERNMENT REACTION. (FYI: DEPARTMENT HAS NOTED REFERENCE TO HUNGER STRIKE IN WEEKLIES.)

5. FATHER BURNS SAID THAT HE HAD NO OBJECTION TO RECOUNTING HIS STORY TO EMBASSY OFFICER. HE IS OBVIOUSLY SINCERE AND WELL INFORMED ON THIS STRIKE; THEREFORE REQUEST, IN YOUR DISCRETION, THAT APPROPRIATE EMBASSY OFFICER CONTACT FATHER BURNS AT LIMA TELEPHONE 67-58-36 (MARCH 16) OR UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 068055

46-90-10 AND INVITE HIM TO TELL HIS STORY. WE WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR EARLY EVALUATION OF THE INFORMATION FATHER BURNS IS OFFERING.

6. FYI: U.S. CATHOLIC CONFERENCE HERE HAS PUBLISHED STORIES ABOUT HUNGER STRIKE IN CATHOLIC WEEKLIES AND HAS ATTEMPTED SO FAR UNSUCCESSFULLY TO INTEREST MAJOR INTERNATIONAL WIRE SERVICES AND NEWSPAPERS. VANCE

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